

Breaking Barriers: The Impact of the Affective Filter on English Education Students' Speaking Performance

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Abstract: This research aims to analyze the influence of affective filters, Krashen's theory, on students' speaking performance through the three affective filters: self-confidence, motivation, and anxiety. A qualitative study was used to understand how affective filters influence students' speaking performance. To collect the data, the researchers used questionnaires distributed to 10 participants of English Education students. The result shows that self-confidence becomes the main factor that makes their speaking ability low. Anxiety can also make it even worse. However, most students are highly motivated to learn English, mainly when speaking English. Therefore, teachers should provide a supportive learning environment to help the students reduce anxiety and enhance self-confidence.



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INTRODUCTION

Speaking well is an essential skill for English language education students. Speaking English is one of the fundamental things that allows students to communicate effectively. Most students need help in developing their speaking skills. Language acquisition is often influenced cognitively, psychologically, or mentally (Bhanu & Kumar, 2023), which we often hear as affective filters. In Krashen's theory, the affective filter hypothesis is divided into three: anxiety, confidence, and motivation, which can affect students' speaking performance. There are several reasons to understand the impact of affective filters. First, it can help teachers know or identify what factors are reducing their speaking performance. Second, as educators, we can develop or provide teaching strategies or methods to increase learning effectiveness. Finally, the classroom atmosphere can be supportive and more conducive so that students participate and are active, allowing faster mastery of the material.

Students have various internal and external factors during the learning process, especially speaking. There is a lack of understanding of how students' psyche, such as confidence, anxiety, and motivation, can affect their performance during speaking practice. This research seeks to determine the impact of affective filters on students' speaking ability. However, sometimes, teachers do not recognize the symptoms when students speak. During the learning process, there needs to be a learning strategy to support and create a learning atmosphere to overcome the affective filter problem experienced by students. In this research, it is necessary to find teaching strategies that can be helpful and more effective by considering these psychological factors.

Research Objectives are (1) to identify the influence of affective filters on student performance when speaking; and (2) to provide learning strategies to create a supportive learning environment.

Several things are different from previous research. Previous research discussed the role of teachers in knowing students' affective filters. This research focuses on the impact experienced by students when speaking in terms of their affective filters and the teacher's strategy to overcome these problems. This research aims to identify the relationship between affective filters and speaking performance between students and teachers and students and other students. It focuses on students' performance in speaking, which examines various hypothesis affective filters that can affect them in producing language. And also on how anxiety, confidence, and motivation affect when communicating in English. The findings of this study will provide benefits, both for educators and students, for English language teaching and learning. Therefore, researchers want to research with the title "Breaking Barriers: The Impact of the Affective Filter on English Education Students Speaking Performance in Class".

THEORETICAL SUPPORT

Affective Filter Hypothesis

The term "Affective Filter" was first introduced by Dulay and Burt (1977), but then Krashen adopted it in his work. Krashen (1982) states that the Affective Filter is a psychological wall that prevents the student's mind from processing input effectively. This condition hinders cognition and hinders learning because of a person's mood or feelings at that time. If someone is in the right mood or state of mind, his emotions and personality will help language acquisition.

Krashen (1982) states that an individual should accomplish these 3 elements to be fluent in speaking, which are also known as affective filters: motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety. An individual's Affective Filter can be high or low. The higher the filter, the greater the possibility that language learning will be hindered. On the other hand, the lower the filter, the greater the possibility that language learning will be successful.

Motivation

According to Gardner (1985), "motivation is related to effort, want, desire, reason of behaviour, and affectivity associated with learning a second language and has a close link with language learning". He considers effort and desire as the parameters to call an individual a motivated person. Therefore, we can not say that an individual who likes to learn a second language is motivated. Still, when he/she tries to understand the second language and makes an effort to know it, it can be measured that he/she is motivated in foreign language learning.

Self Confidence

Self-confidence, often linked to self-esteem, is when someone sets a goal for herself/himself, and she/he can achieve it. Self-confidence creates positive learning, motivates the students to learn the target language and enjoy the process, and creates an actual dialogue or speaking. People who lack self-confidence may be quiet and shy, but this is not always true. They doubt themselves and their ability, which causes them not to have enough courage even to try.

Anxiety

Foreign language anxiety is defined as a distinction of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to language learning in a classroom setting. There are 3 different types of anxiety. The first type is when someone is too shy to speak in front of people due to a lack of self-confidence. The second type happens when someone fears that the teacher will correct her/him, as it will increase their tension. The last type is test anxiety or performance anxiety, which comes from failure when they have high expectations of themselves but get low scores on tests, which can lead them to frustration (Horwitz et al., 1986).

Anxiety in foreign language learning can significantly affect the students' speaking performance. Research conducted by Khouni et al. (2022) found that students often experienced anxiety when speaking English. They feel anxious, especially when asked to speak English in front of the class, frequently caused by less confidence and fear of negative judgment from classmates and teachers. As a result, they could not maximize their speaking performance. They focused more on the judgment and feedback than just believing in their ability and progress.

METHOD

This study used a descriptive-qualitative method to explore how affective filters impact the students' speaking performance. Descriptive-qualitative research is a more descriptive and interpretive approach involving a deep and contextual data collection process to understand the phenomenon's meaning (Creswell, 2013). This method is used to know how affective filters influence the students' speaking performance. To collect the data, the researchers distributed the questionnaire in one of the Public Speaking classes to see how students speak in front of the class. The instruments were gained and adapted from the previous study. A total of 10 students out of 40 were chosen as the study participants. Data analysis includes several stages. The first stage is data collection. Next, researchers categorized or coded the data based on themes or topics that arise from questionnaires, such as fear, lack of confidence, or excessive anxiety. Then, the data is presented in the form of narrative interpretation. Validation of findings is done by data triangulation, namely by comparing questionnaire and observation data to ensure that the findings are valid and reliable.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Self-confidence

I feel confidence speaking English in front of the class
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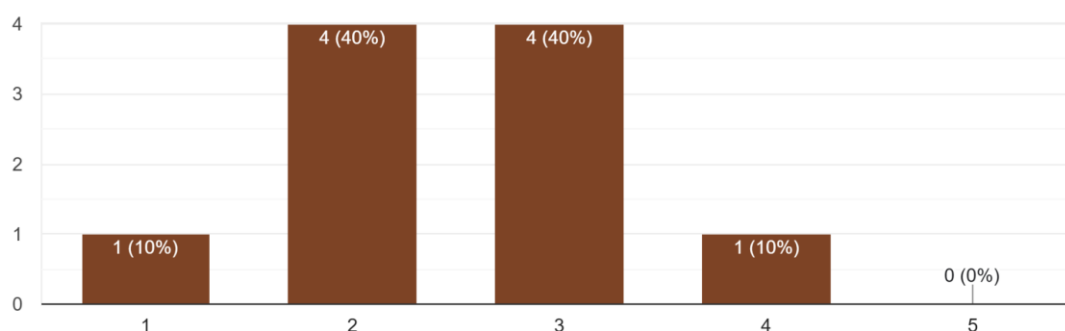


Figure 1.1. Self-confidence

From this data, most participants feel confident enough to be less confident while speaking English in front of the class. The data shows that 1 participant strongly agreed (10%), 4 participants agreed (40%), 4 participants less agreed (40%), 1 participant disagreed (10%), and no one strongly disagreed (0%). The result shows that the overall levels of self-confidence are average, with most participants needing more confidence in their speaking ability.

I am not afraid of making mistakes while speaking in front of the class

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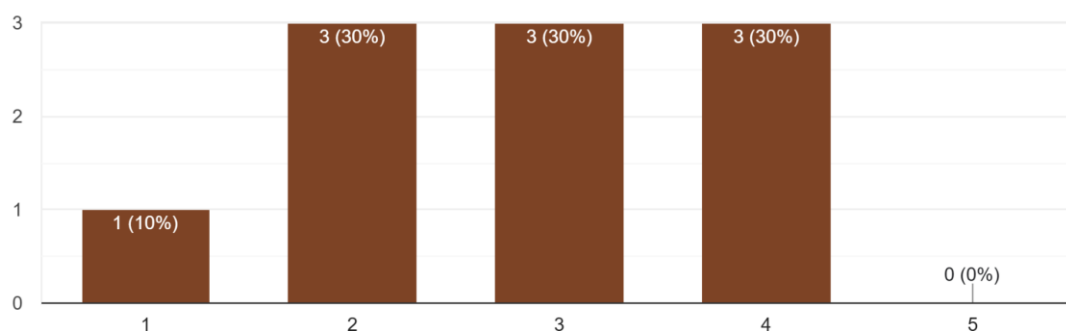


Figure 1.2. Self-confidence

The data shows that 1 participant strongly agreed (10%), 3 participants agreed (30%), 3 participants less agreed (30%), 3 participants disagreed (30%), and no one strongly disagreed (0%). This indicates that half of participants still have concerns about making mistakes while speaking English in front of the class. However, some participants still felt comfortable enough to speak English in front of the class.

I am comfortable making an English conversation in speaking class both with the teacher and classmates

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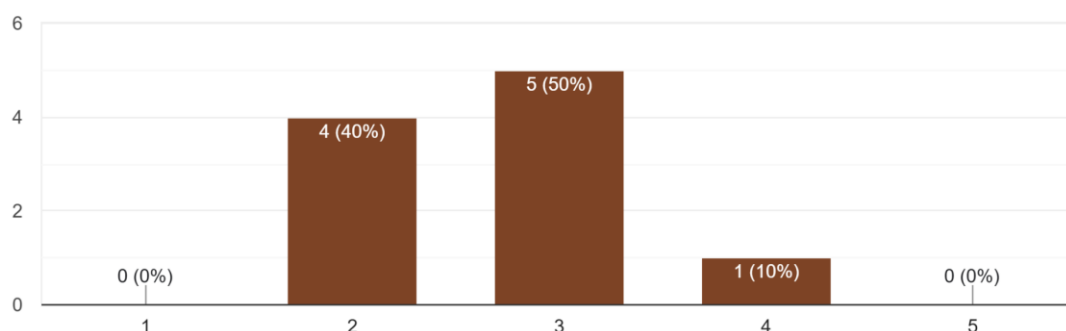


Figure 1.3. Self-confidence

The data shows that 0 participants strongly agreed (0%), 4 participants agreed (40%), 5 participants less agreed (50%), 1 participant disagreed (10%), and no one strongly disagreed (0%). It shows that the participants felt less comfortable enough to build a conversation with their friends and lecturers. However, most participants needed help when they had to build English conversation with the lectures.

I trust my ability to communicate clearly in English

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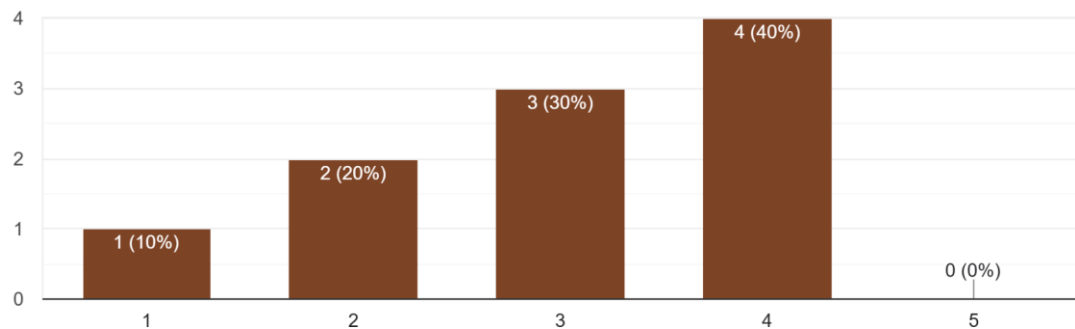


Figure 1.4. Self-confidence

The data shows that the participants had doubts about their speaking ability. One participant strongly agreed (10%), two participants agreed (20%), three participants less agreed (30%), four participants disagreed (40%), and no one strongly disagreed (0%). This means that their self-confidence is still low.

Even if I make mistakes, I feel confident continuing speak English

10 jawaban

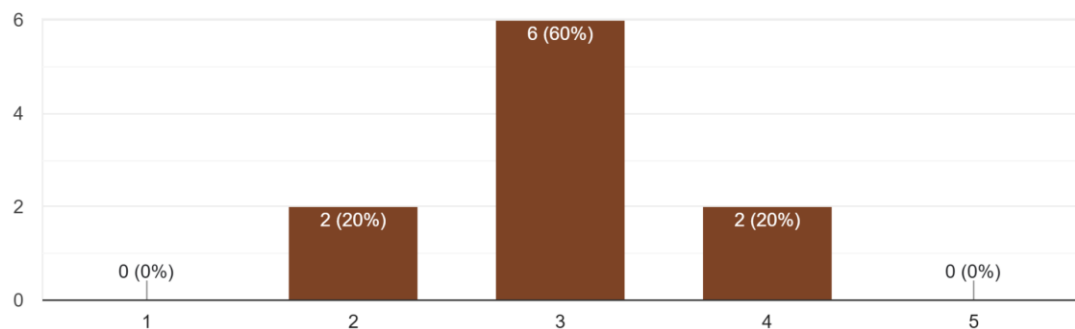


Figure 1.5. Self-confidence

The data shows that the majority of the students felt less confident about continuing their speech after making mistakes. Eight participants (80%) less agreed and disagreed, which means that they were not able to continue their speech after making mistakes. The rest of the participants agreed, and no one strongly agreed.

2. Motivation

I feel motivated to continue participating in speaking class, for example in Public Speaking class, even if it is challenging

10 jawaban

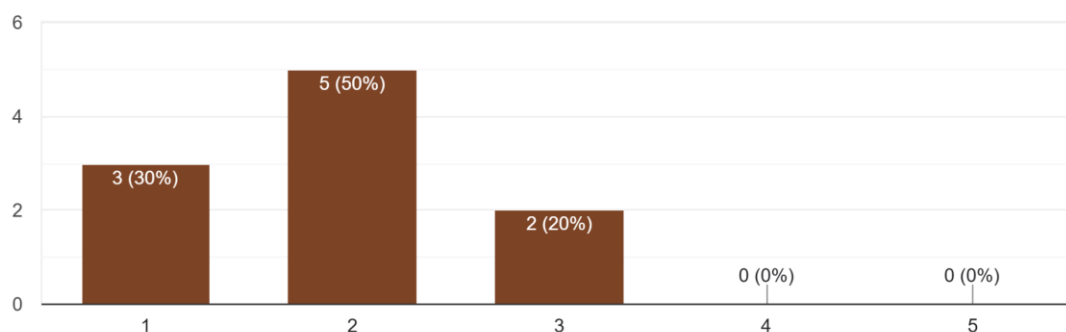


Figure 2.1. Motivation

The data shows that most participants (80%) agreed and strongly agreed, which means they were motivated to participate in speaking class. 50 % agreed, and 30 % even strongly agreed. The rest of the participants disagreed, and no one strongly disagreed.

I always feel sleepy during the speaking class

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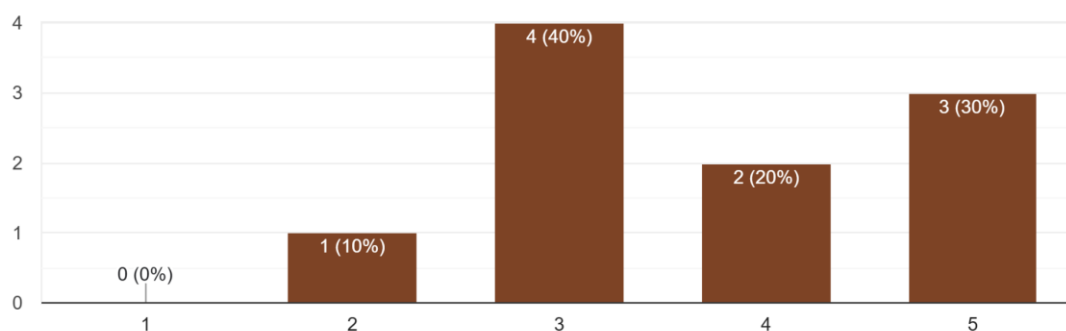


Figure 2.2. Motivation

The data shows that half of the participants (50%) disagreed to strongly disagreed with the statement that they always feel sleepy during the speaking class, and 40% of the participants less agreed with that statement. Although most of them disagreed, 10% of the participants agreed, and no one strongly agreed with that statement. It can be concluded that most of them feel motivated enough and able to stay alive during the speaking class session even though 10% of them fought with sleepiness.

When the speaking class started, I didn't pay much attention to the lecturer's explanation

10 jawaban

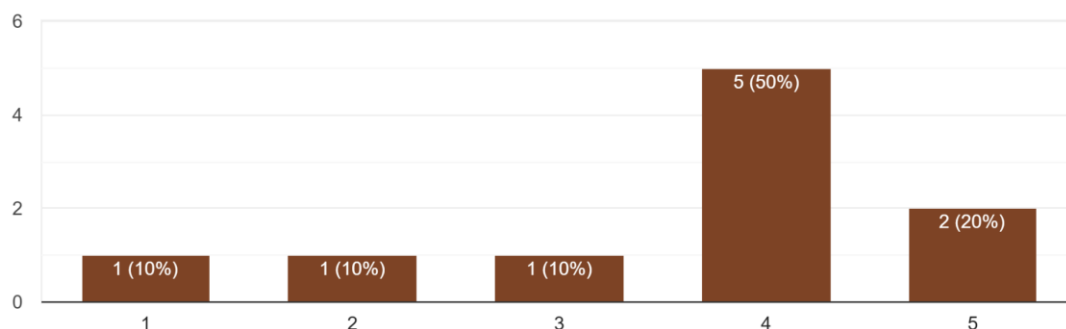


Figure 2.3. Motivation

The data shows that the majority of the participants less agreed to strongly disagreed (10% less agreed, 50% disagreed, and 20% strongly disagreed) with the motion. The rest of the participants, as many as 20,% agreed and strongly agreed with the motion. This indicates that most of them pay attention to their lectures, and a few are less focused during the speaking class.

If my speaking score is bad, I don't want to improve myself to get a better score. (Jika berbicara saya buruk, saya tidak ingin memperbaiki diri untuk mendapatkan nilai yang lebih baik).

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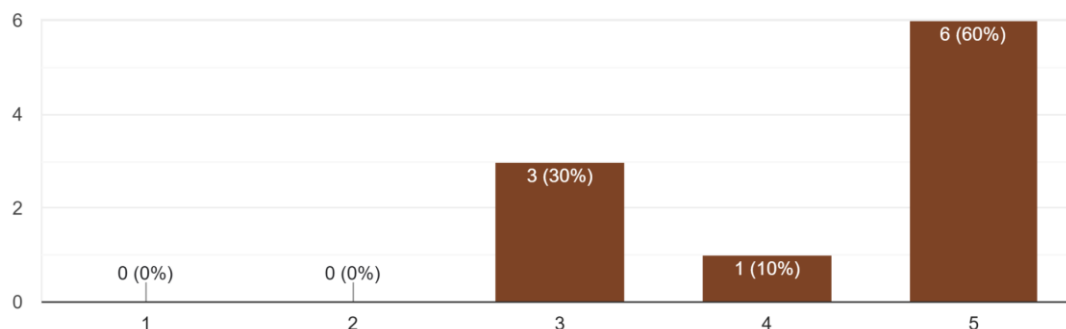


Figure 2.4. Motivation

The data shows that most of the participants disagree with the statement. Ten percent of the participants disagree, and even 60 percent of the participants strongly disagree. The rest of the participants less agree. It shows that most of the participants want to improve themselves to get a better score, and the rest just feel neutral.

3. Anxiety

I always feel nervous and confused when I speak English in speaking class

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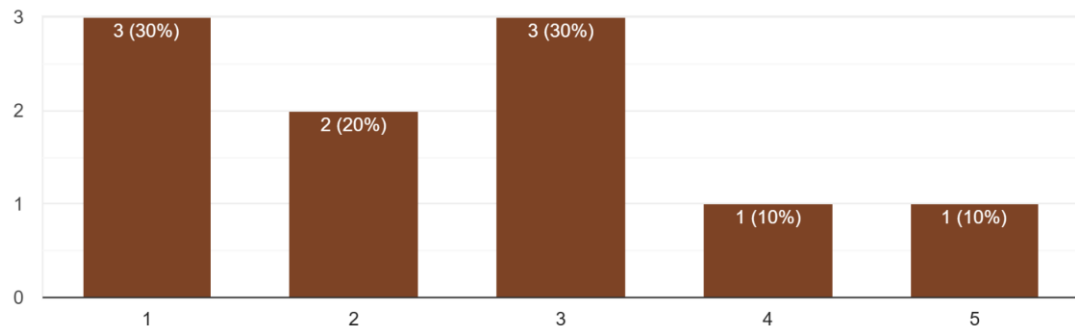


Figure 3.1. Anxiety

The data shows that there are variations in the responses toward the statement. 50% agreed and strongly agreed with the statement, which indicates that their level of anxiety is high. On the other side, 20% of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed, which suggests that they do not feel nervous and confused when they speak English in class. The rest of the participants (30%) less agreed, meaning that their anxiety level is lower or neutral.

I am afraid that other students will laugh at me when I speak English in speaking class

10 jawaban

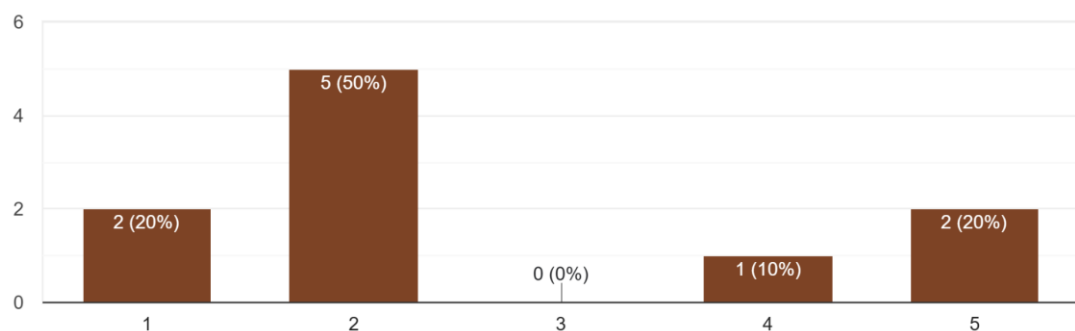


Figure 3.2. Anxiety

The data indicates that most of the participants are anxious about their classmates' reactions when they speak English in front of the class. 50% agreed and 20% strongly agreed with the statement. On the other hand, the rest of the participants showed lower anxiety, with 10% disagreeing and 20% strongly disagreeing.

My heart even beats faster when I have to speak English in front of the class

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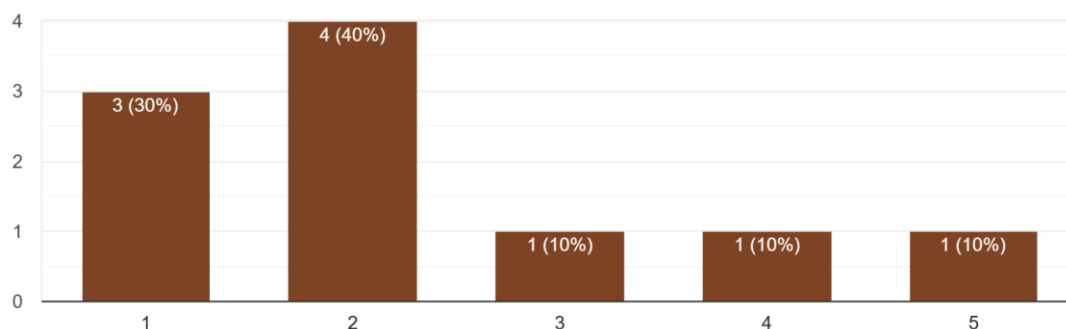


Figure 3.3. Anxiety

The data indicates that most of the participants have high anxiety when they have to speak English in front of the class, with 40% agreed and 30% even strongly agreed with the statement. This means that most of them experience emotional and physical pressure, like heartbeats when speaking English in front of the class. However, there are 30 % who have lower anxiety.

I feel anxious and panicked when I have to speak English without preparation

10 jawaban

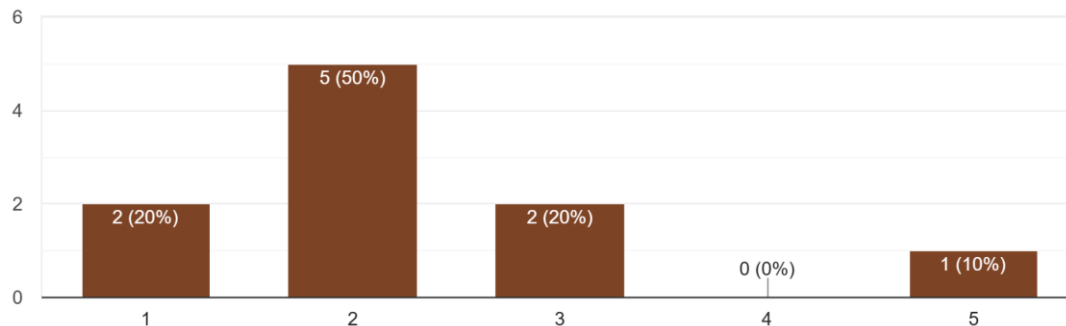


Figure 3.4. Anxiety

The data shows that the majority of participants feel anxiety and panic when they have to speak English spontaneously or without any preparation, with 50% agreed and 20% even strongly agreed with the statement. It means that preparation is essential for them. However, 20% less agreed, and 10% strongly disagreed, meaning they feel less anxiety and even more confidence to speak English without preparation.

Even when I have been preparing and studying all the speaking learning materials, I still feel anxious about it

10 jawaban

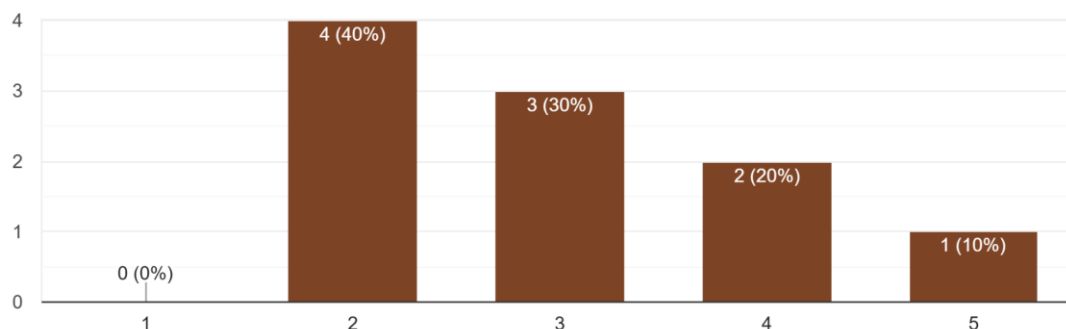


Figure 3.5. Anxiety

The data shows that even though they have prepared before speaking, they still have anxiety. It was supported by 40% of the participants who agreed with the statements. The rest of the participants less agreed to strongly disagreed with the statement, which indicates that they feel more confident after preparing the material before speaking.

Based on the findings above, students' self-confidence is, on average, low. Although some of the students feel confident speaking English in front of the class, most students doubt their speaking ability. Some students can see that less agreed and disagreed with the statement about self-confidence, especially when they make a mistake. Other than that, the students also find it difficult to build a conversation with classmates and lectures. This indicates that their self-confidence still needs to be improved.

On the other side, students' motivation is high enough. The majority of students feel motivated to participate in speaking class. They do not consider speaking class to be boring. Most of them also show their awareness to improve their speaking ability for better results. However, some students are still less focused and feel sleepy during the class session. It shows that their motivation is high enough, and the effort to maintain consistency is needed so that the students can actively participate.

Furthermore, in terms of anxiety, most of the students show high levels of anxiety, especially when it comes to speaking English in front of the class or, even worse, spontaneously. Andriani (2024), in her study, also found that many students experience anxiety, particularly when they are required to speak in front of the class. However, some students have good self-confidence and do not care about it, especially when they have prepared it before. It also indicates that preparation is essential to decrease anxiety and increase self-confidence.

Consequently, teachers should create a supportive learning environment. Providing encouragement and the right approach makes students feel more comfortable and confident when speaking. Overcoming anxiety and increasing students' desire to be more active in learning English are also essential.

CONCLUSION

As a result, most students hesitate and experience difficulties in speaking skills; they are afraid to continue talking after making mistakes. Self-confidence becomes the main factor that makes their speaking ability low. On the other hand, students desire to

participate in activities that can be said to learn and practice their speaking. Emotional support from teachers can overcome the anxiety experienced by students and increase students' confidence by providing support and giving strategies appropriately. In addition, teachers can also teach that mistakes are part of the learning process to reduce student anxiety and increase student motivation to continue learning and practice. Positive teacher feedback and peer responses can create a safe atmosphere and environment and improve students' self-confidence. This allows students to communicate better and be more active in learning English, especially speaking. Overall, this research provides insight into self-confidence, motivation, and anxiety being important in overcoming psychological factors.

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